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ABSTRACT

The focus of this document is on the reemergence of the principal as the school's instructional leader as attributable to effective schools research. The document presents a framework that conceptualizes instructional leadership as a two-dimensional construct comprised of leadership functions and leadership processes. The leadership functions described include: (1) framing and communicating school goals; (2) supervising and evaluating instruction; (3) coordinating curriculum; (4) developing high academic standards and expectations; (5) monitoring student progress; (6) promoting the professional development of teachers; (7) protecting instructional time; and (8) developing incentives for students and teachers. The leadership processes described are: communication; decision making; conflict management; group process; change process; and environmental interaction. (Eight references) (SI)

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INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

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The reemergence of the principal as the school's instructional leader is directly attributable to the effective schools research. Edmonds, Rutter, Brookover, and Lezotte all found that instructionally effective schools are characterized by strong instructional leadership. Although research from related areas (e.g., management, change theory, implementation) as well as conventional wisdom underscore the pivotal role played by principals, it was not until the effective schools findings were disseminated that policy makers, district administrators, and leadership trainers began to focus on the principal's role in coordinating, developing and controlling instruction. The confluence of research findings related to the leadership role of the principal has proved so powerful that school district practices as well as pre- and in-service training programs for principals are now becoming shaped by the expectation that principals will act as instructional leaders for their schools.

At the outset of this chapter it seems sensible to ask what is meant by the term instructional leadership. Although the effective schools research characterizes the principal as a strong instructional leader, such vague characterizations are of limited usefulness to practitioners. They offer little guidance as to how one acts as a strong instructional leader. This limitation is apparent in many leadership training programs that have emerged from the effective schools studies. They typically deal with the principal's instructional leadership solely from the perspective of the effective schools correlates. Thus, the principal is taught how to monitor student progress, define goals, supervise instruction and coordinate curriculum. While this information is of critical importance, we contend that an exclusive focus on leadership functions - what the instructional leader must do - is incomplete. Leadership development must also encompass the dimension of leadership processes -- how the principal works with staff to implement change.

The current focus on instructional leadership functions is due to deficiencies in the effective schools research base and to an overreaction against the previous dominance of "process approaches" to leadership development. As Cuban (1984) notes, although the effective schools research describes the characteristics of effective schools, relatively little is known concerning how to create effective schools or about the principal's role in this process. This has led most researchers, program developers and trainers to focus on what is known - the substance of the effective schools correlates, referred to here as the instructional leadership functions. While this is a significant limitation in terms of application to training contexts, the power of the effective schools research lies in the ability, for the first time, to specify the core responsibilities of principals which contribute to student learning. Earlier managerial training for principals was, in our opinion, more limited in that it addressed how principals should "do things" but provided little or no guidance as to which activities were most important (Cooper & Boyd, in press; Murphy & Hallinger, in press).

In this chapter we present a framework which conceptualizes instructional leadership as a two dimensional construct comprised of leadership functions and leadership processes (see also Bossert, Rowan, Dwyer & Lee, 1982). This framework makes it possible to consider ways in which instructional leadership varies in different school contexts and how principals can exercise strong instructional leadership using quite different leadership styles. In this framework instructional leadership functions represent the substance of the principal's instructional leadership role (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985-a). These functions include:

1. Framing and communicating school goals;
2. Supervising and evaluating instruction;

3. Coordinating curriculum;

4. Developing high academic standards and expectations;

5. Monitoring student progress;

6. Promoting the professional development of teachers;

7. Protecting instructional time;

8. Developing incentives for students and teachers.

In contrast to this substantive focus, instructional leadership processes represent the guiding activities by which the various functions are implemented (Murphy, Hallinger, Weil & Mitman, 1983). These leadership processes include:

1. Communication;

2. Decision making;

3. Conflict management;

4. Group process;

5. Change process;

6. Environmental interaction.

It is through the appropriate use of these leadership processes that principals are able to ensure that the functions have their intended power. For example, a principal must be able to utilize skills in group process, environmental interaction, and communication if school-wide goals are to have the desired effect of mobilizing teachers and parents towards a common end. Similarly, a principal interested in developing a coordinated curriculum would need to have skills in the areas of decision making, change and group process. In the remainder of this chapter we will describe the framework outlined above and offer a few illustrations of how the combination of instructional leadership processes and functions provides a more powerful description of the

requirements and possibilities of the principal's instructional leadership role.

Leadership Functions

Framing and communicating school goals. Studies of instructionally effective schools indicate that such schools have a clearly defined mission; this mission often focuses on improving student achievement. The emphasis is on a few school-wide goals around which staff energy and school resources can be mobilized. A few coordinated school-wide objectives, each with a manageable scope seem to work best. This makes coordination of goals less difficult and also facilitates effective communication of the school's mission. In instructionally schools, the principal plays a key role in conceptualizing the school's goals, obtaining staff input on goal development, and in framing goals in such a way that they are easily translated into classroom objectives.

The principal can communicate school goals by referring to them often and in a variety of school contexts. The importance placed on the school's goals by the principal, however, is also communicated by the substantive decisions made by the principal during the school year. Staffing, resource allocation, staff development, and curricular decisions all reflect the operational priorities of the principal. In instructionally effective schools, principals are able to maintain a somewhat higher level of consistency in their goals and operational decisions than is found in typical schools (see Hallinger & Murphy, 1985-a and Murphy et al., 1983 references regarding the various functions and processes).

Supervising and evaluating instruction. Principals in effective schools frequently observe classroom instruction in their role as supervisors. Although they stress informal observations, these principals also maintain a high level of accountability with respect to classroom instruction. They work with teachers to insure that classroom objectives are directly connected to school

goals and review classroom instruction using as many sources of information as possible -- formal and informal classroom observations, lesson plans, and student work products. Finally, they offer concrete, constructive suggestions to teachers, assisting them in improving their instructional practices.

Monitoring student progress. A key instructional leadership function carried out by principals in effective schools is the frequent monitoring of student progress. The principal uses a variety of information on student learning (e.g., student work products, curricular tests, standardized tests) to assess the school's instructional program and progress towards school goals. Teachers use this information for diagnostic purposes, adjusting their instructional strategies and pacing based upon student progress. The frequent monitoring and feedback of student performance results reinforces the norm of staff accountability for student learning and the belief that schools can make a difference.

Coordinating curriculum. School effectiveness is also associated with a high degree of alignment among instructional objectives, curricular materials and testing instruments. Numerous studies conducted during the 1970s and 1980s have revealed a surprising variation across schools in the degree to which the students are exposed to the content tested on standardized tests used to assess school effectiveness. As instructional leaders, principals can work to insure that curricular materials used in their schools are consistent with the school's instructional objectives, that such materials are mutually reinforcing, and that instructional objectives are aligned with the instruments used to monitor student progress.

Protecting instructional time. Policies and enforcement practices that reduce tardiness, absenteeism, and truancy increase learning time for students.

Principals can also increase student opportunities to learn by protecting classroom instructional time from interruptions due to public address announcements, by working with teachers to develop more effective classroom management and instructional practices, and by reducing the number of non-instructional school activities that enroach on classroom time.

Promoting professional development and instructional improvement. Principals can support the professional growth of teachers in a number of ways. They can work with teacher directly by conducting inservice workshops for their staffs and by working in the classroom with teachers who are learning new skills. They can also support the development of teachers indirectly by making them aware of staff development and training programs, distributing research and curricular reports, arranging for teachers to observe their colleagues teach, giving public and private recognition to teachers' efforts to improve instruction, and allocating resources to instructional improvement activities.

Developing high standards and expectations. In effective classrooms and schools, high expectations are maintained for all students. These expectations are embedded in school-wide policies and standards and are reflected in the behavior of adults throughout the school. Principals promote high expectations for students indirectly through the expectations they hold for themselves and their staffs. In addition, they shape school-wide expectations more directly through the policies they develop in such areas as grading, reporting student progress, promotion, retention, remediation, student grouping, and classroom instructional practices.

Providing incentives for students and teachers. An important aspect of the school learning climate is the nature of the school rewards systems. Principals in instructionally effective schools do not leave the task of

rewarding students solely to individual teachers; they develop incentives for learning that are school-wide in orientation. These include honor rolls, award assemblies, certificates of merit for attendance and behavior, mention in the school newspaper and/or newsletter, pictures, displays or other forms of recognition in the lobby, as well as the personal word of encouragement or pat on the back. Similarly, instructional leaders find ways to reward or recognize teachers for their efforts. Some of these are informal -- private words of praise; others are more formal such as recognition before peers, nomination for awards, or letters to the personnel files of teachers.

Leadership Processes

Communication. Among the processes, communication is especially significant. Regular use of systematic communications is essential to building productive working relationships between the principal and staff and among teachers. Also, as instructional leadership assumes greater importance for principals, this change in role behavior must be communicated and reinforced regularly in interactions with staff and parents. Communication must be integrally connected with each of the leadership functions, and overall school communications should clearly reflect the importance of instruction. Given the preference among principals for live, face to face communication, it seems particularly important that principals make the best use of routine events (e.g., faculty meetings, supervisory conferences, student assemblies, PTA events) to communicate the school's mission and their own priorities related to curriculum and instruction. In addition, instructional leaders create opportunities in which they can communicate the substantive information related to the various leadership functions (e.g., visits to classrooms, faculty retreats, task force or grade/department meetings).

Conflict management. The development of a strong goal consensus and a common language within the school regarding curriculum and instruction increases the likelihood that conflict will be productively channelled in the organization. Recognizing the varying concerns of different groups of teachers and parents is the first step principals must take in developing a school mission, a coordinated curriculum, or a school-wide reward structure. Conflict is an inevitable consequence of the process of building a more effective school since the movement towards a common set of assumptions of what the school should be doing and how that might occur may result in a slight reduction in individual teacher autonomy. Thus the ability to manage conflict so that group cohesion is enhanced and school norms develop which support the attainment of school-wide goals is critical for principals interested in instructional improvement.

Group process and decision making. The effective schools findings, taken as a whole, suggest that instructional effectiveness is greater when teachers teach within the context of a common work structure (i.e., common goals, a coordinated curriculum, a school-wide discipline system). Many of the leadership functions discussed earlier entail the development of school-wide policies which make it easier to provide effective instruction in classrooms. For example, school policies regarding student behavior and absenteeism, scheduling, public address announcements, and time allocated to instruction in various subject areas require greater consensus than is typically found in schools. In order to bring about such a change without encroaching on the ability of teachers to maximize their creativity in classroom instruction, special attention should be paid to developing collaborative organizational decision making processes.

Strong leadership does not require principals to make all decisions, nor

does collegiality necessitate that all decisions be made by the group. The role of the teachers and principal in the decision-making process should, however, be clearly specified before the process begins. Likewise the orientation of groups should be toward completion of a task, not maintenance of group relations. Principals should promote a feeling of freedom of group members to make contributions and suggestions and of rough equality of participation with each other. Principals should also make certain that group processes lead to some tangible or symbolic conclusion.

Change process. Organizational conditions in schools that discourage change need to be clearly understood. Major changes in instruction and curriculum, also, are more likely to be successfully implemented if they are based on collegiality and collaboration rather than solely on line authority. Thus, significant input from teachers, students and parents is recommended in the development of the school mission and goals. Likewise, teacher involvement in the definition of the content of the school's curricular objectives and materials is an essential step in the change process if principals expect effective implementation of instructional and curricular innovations.

Environmental interaction. The last of the leadership processes contained in this framework of instructional leadership is environmental interaction. This leadership process variable is comprised of principal behaviors designed both to connect the instructional processes and the curriculum of the schools with its environment and to protect instruction and curriculum from fluctuations in that environment. It recognizes that principals play an important role in interpreting the needs and demands which abound in the school's environment. The principal more than any other staff member in the school is expected to mediate those environmental expectations and incorporate

them into the school's program. Conversely, the principal as a "boundary spanner" is also in a position to influence the expectations and desires of the parents, the community, and the district office. Both of these roles suggest the important role played by instructional leaders in: 1) obtaining input from the environment (e.g., the school community) in defining the school's mission; 2) communicating the mission both inside and outside the school to key audiences; and, 3) buffering the school's program from central-office and community pressures which might impede the accomplishment of the school's mission.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented a framework for examining the instructional leadership role of principals. This framework is comprised of two dimensions of principal behavior: leadership functions and processes. It is our contention that an understanding of the principal's role behavior in this area is incomplete unless both dimensions are considered. The ability of principals to effectively carry out their various functions as instructional leaders is often limited by their ability to manage the process of change and create a productive work environment.

Effective schools are characterized by more collegial relationships among teachers around curricular issues as well as by greater involvement of the principal in the area of curriculum and instruction. This implies that instructional leadership must be approached in terms of both the content of the role -- i.e., implementing the effective schools correlates -- and in terms of leadership as a process -- i.e., insuring that desired changes are brought about.

We strongly believe the correlates of effective schools do promote

instructional effectiveness and should form the basis of the the principal's instructional leadership functions. However we are equally convinced that there is no one right way to develop these conditions in schools. Numerous organizational conditions (e.g., faculty experience, student age, unionism, school size) and school context variables (e.g., community socio-economic status, state requirements and mandated programs) influence the appropriate style of instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985-b; Hallinger & Murphy, in press). This implies that principals should vary the nature of the process skills used in attempting to set common goals, coordinate curriculum, or develop a school-wide reward system.

We have witnessed a variety of instructionally effective schools in which principals functioned as strong instructional leaders as measured in the coordination and development of their instructional programs. Some of these principals were highly directive; others orchestrated from the background. The difference does not appear to lie as much in their activities in the dimension of instructional leadership functions, but in the manner in which they used process skills. Some guidance already exists as to the situations in which principals should use different process orientations (Hallinger & Murphy, in press). Future studies of effective school leadership should provide additional guidance on the critical question of how principal leadership should be exercised to increase the effectiveness of schools under differing conditions.

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